POEMS
ON
SEVERAL SUBJECTS:
WRITTEN BY
STEPHEN DUCK,

Lately a poor *Thresher* in a Barn in the County of *Wilts*, at the Wages of Four Shillings and Six Pence *per* Week:

Which were publickly read by

The Right Honourable the Earl of *Macclesfield*, in the Drawing-Room at *Windsor* Castle, on *Friday* the 11th of *September* 1730, to Her MAJESTY:

Who was thereupon most graciously pleased to take the Author into her Royal Protection, by allowing him a Salary of Thirty Pounds *per Annum*, & a small House at *Richmond* in *Surrey*, to live in, for the better support of himself and Family.

The TENTH EDITION, corrected.
To which is added,
Some account of the LIFE of the AUTHOR.

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BRITISH MUSEUM

The following Pieces, we hope will not be thought improperly placed here.

On Stephen Duck.

O DUCK! prefer'd by bounteous Queen,
To cackle verſe on *Richmond Green*:
Wild Duck in genius! You on high
Soar with bold Wing: our rhyming Fry
Are tame ones, and not made to fly.
All glorious Souls, whoe'er have been,
Some leſſer beings uſher in.
One hardly worthy to unlooſe,
The leathern thongs that tie thy ſhoes,
We judge, did fix his eye on thee,
In his *Duck Iſland* Prophecy:
Where, now fulfill'd, we ſenſe explore,
Dark, (as it ſhould be) all before.
Thy notes our ears with pleaſure treat,
So very wild, ſo very ſweet:
More than *Amphion* thou haſt done,
And raiſed walls, which prove thy own.
This, Stephen, if there's faith in news,
Preferment's Heaven open'd views:
And yet, by Sovereign goodneſs own'd,
By Criticks hands eſcapes unſton'd.
O ſent in mercy to theſe times!
With vigour *threſh* our modern Rhymes:
Much ſtalk from little grain withdraw,
And ſave our pence in buying ſtraw.
No chaffy Bard dare thee aſſail,
There is no fence againſt a Flail.
Our dangerous ſtate we all diſcern,
And fetch Dictators from the Barn.

TO

To Mr. STEPHEN DUCK,
the celebrated *Wiltshire Poet* & *Thresher*, on his late preferment by Her Majesty.

1.

OLD *Homer*, tho' a *Bard divine*,
(If not by Fame bely'd)
Stroll'd about *Greece*; old Ballads sung;
A Beggar liv'd and dy'd.

2.

Fam'd *Milton* too, our *British Bard*,
Who as divinely wrote,
Sung like an Angel, but in vain;
He dy'd not worth a groat.

3.

Thrice happy Duck! a milder Fate
Thy genius does attend:
Well hast thou thresh'd thy barns and brains;
To make a Queen thy Friend!

4.

O! may she still new favours grant,
And make the *Laurel* thine!
Then shall we see *next New-Year's Ode*,
By far the *last* outshine.

THE

SOME ACCOUNT OF THE LIFE OF STEPHEN DUCK.

STEPHEN DUCK, the Author of the following POEMS, was born in the year 1705, near the Seat of *Peter Bathurſt* Eſq; at *Clarendon Park* in the County of *Wilts*, of Parents remarkable only for their honeſty and induſtry. However, we find he had ſome ſmall share of reading and writing beſtowed on him, with very little or almoſt no Grammar: For before he had reach'd his *Syntaxis*, his Mother had a very notable complaint exhibited againſt him by his Schoolmaſter, *viz. That he took his Learning too faſt, even faſter than the Maſter could give it him.* So that the prudent Parent, to prevent ſo *growing an evil*, removed her Son from School to the Plow, leſt he might become too learned a Gentleman for the Family that produced him.

The ſeeds of Learning being once ſowed in our young Plowman, there was no poſſibility of weeding them out: For the labour of his mind generally accompany'd that of his body. *Milton* was his conſtant companion in the field and in the barn: He had likewiſe made himſelf Maſter of a ſet of the *Spectators*, & *Bailey*'s *English Dictionary*. Our Author, thus equipp'd, aſcends the Hill of *Parnaſſus*.

The courteous Reader muſt be inform'd, that our Poet may be number'd amongſt thoſe Men, whoſe *learning* and *fine parts* are not able to give their yoke-mates that *ſatisfaction* and *content*, which a very weak mind with a vigorous conſtitution are generally apt to do. However, he has had three Children born to him in wedlock. At the Chriſtning of the laſt Child, one of the good Women happen'd to blab it out to the Reverend Gentleman who perform'd the ceremony, *That Mr.* Duck *was a Man of great learning, and had wit enough to be a Parſon; for that he could make Verſes like any mad, and as good as ever she had heard in her life.* Upon the recommendation of this wiſe Woman, the Doctor, who is a dignify'd perſon in the Univerſity of *Oxford*, had ſome diſcourſe with Mr. *Duck*, and gave him a Theme,

Theme, with ſome directions for the improvement of his genius. But when Mr. *Duck* had finish'd his Verſes, and preſented them to him for his approbation, the Doctor recommended them to the flames. This was a moſt cruel diſcouragement; ſo that for a long time after he was quite out of conceit with himſelf, and went on writing and burning, & his Wife continually ſcolding, becauſe he neglected his labour: And when he was *ſcanning* his lines, she would oftentimes run out and raiſe the whole neighbourhood, telling them, *That her Husband dealt with the Devil, and was going mad, becauſe he did nothing all day but talk to himſelf, and tell his fingers.*

But maugre this ill ſituation of his poetical affairs, his fame at length began to rouze the Wits of *Wiltshire* to ſome conſideration of him, and he was admitted to the tables of a great many worthy Gentlemen. He now wrote his Poem call'd the *Shunamite*, that on *Poverty*, and the *Thresher's Labour*; which were handed about the country with great applauſe, in manuſcript. A copy was ſent to the Right Honourable the Earl of *Tankerville* at *Windſor*, where the Honourable Mrs. *Clayton*, of her Majeſty's Bedchamber, happening to ſee them, that Lady immediately

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diately presented them to the Queen: They soon came in much reputation at Court by all Judges of Poetry; & the Author was then sent for to *Windsor*, where her Majesty was graciously pleased to declare, *She would allow him thirty Guineas a year, and a little House at* Richmond, *till he should be better provided for.*

Being ask'd by a Noble Earl to write upon the *Sun*, he said, That *as he had no true knowledge, nor had read any thing of the nature of that great luminary, he was at present uncapable of such a task.* He has read *Milton* with such attention, (whom he esteems the first of the *English* Poets) that he can repeat the whole book by heart. The *Spectators*, he says, were of singular use to him, and *Bailey*'s *Dictionary* instructed him in the signification of all words which he thought *uncouth.* He gave such answers as were entirely satisfactory to those who might have any suspicion that the Poems were wrote by some other person; and as he readily accounted for every thing that seem'd extraordinary, it is demonstrable that he walks in no other *stilts* than those of his own GENIUS, which has justly acquired the esteem of the publick, as well as the protection & beneficence of his Royal Patroness.

The

THE SHUNAMITE.*

DEIGN, heavenly Muſes, to aſſiſt my Song:
To heavenly Muſes heavenly themes belong.
But chiefly thou, O GOD, my ſoul inſpire,
And touch my lips with thy celeſtial fire:
If thou delight'ſt in flow'ry *Carmel*'s ſhade,
Or *Jordan*'s ſtream, from thence I crave thy aid:
Inſtruct my tongue, and my low accents raiſe,
To ſing thy wonders, and diſplay thy praiſe;
And make th' inhabitants of *Judah*'s land
Give ear, and *Iſrael* to my voice attend.
Thus when the *Shunamite* had made her prayer,
The crouds promiſcuous throng'd around to hear
Th' amazing tale; while thus her joyful tongue,
Mov'd by the Heavenly Power, began the Song.
Attend, ye ſeed of *Abram*, and give ear
Whilſt I *Jehova*'s glorious acts declare:
From that great ſource of power what wonders ſpring,
If he aſſiſt my lays, my Muſe ſhall ſing.
My Lord and I, to whom all-bounteous Heaven
His bleſſings with no ſparing hand had given,
Like faithful ſtewards of our wealthy ſtore,
Still lodg'd the ſtranger, and reliev'd the poor.
And as *Eliſha*, by divine command,
Came preaching Virtue to a ſinful land,
He often deign'd to lodge within our gate,
And oft receiv'd an hoſpitable treat;
A decent chamber we for him prepar'd;
And he, the generous labour to reward,

A Honours

* See II Kings IV, 8.

Honours in Camp or Court to us propos'd,
Which I refus'd, and thus my mind disclos'd:
Heaven's King hath plac'd us in a fertile land,
Where he showers down his gifts with copious hand;
Already we enjoy an affluent store,
Why should we be sollicitous for more?
Give Martial Camps, and Kingly Courts to them
Who place their only bliss in fleeting fame;
There let them live in golden chains of state,
And be unhappy, only to be great.
But let us in our native soil remain,
Nor barter happiness for sordid gain.
Here we may feed the indigent in peace,
And cloath the bare with the superfluous fleece,
And give the weary fainting Pilgrim ease;
This we prefer to pomp, and formal show,
Which only serve to varnish o'er our woe;
Refulgent ornaments, which dress the proud,
Objects of wonder to the gazing crowd;
Yet seldom give content, or solid rest,
To the vain man by whom they are possess'd.
All blessings, but a Child, had Heaven supply'd,
And only that, the Almighty had deny'd;
Which, when made known to the prophetic Seer,
He said, and I before him did appear,
And the first moment I approach'd the room,
He gravely rose, and did new looks assume;
Not such a wildness and fanatic mien,
With which, some say, the *Delphic* Priests are seen,
When they for mysteries of *Fate* explain
The odd *chimæra*'s of a frantic brain;
But with a grave majestic air he stood,
And more than human in his aspect glow'd,
Celestial grace sat on his radiant look,
And power diffusive shone before he spoke.
Then thus: Hail, generous Soul! thy pious cares
Are not forgot, nor fruitless are thy prayers,

Pro-

Propitious Heav'n, thy virtuous deeds to crown,
Shall make thy barren womb conceive a Son.
So ſpake the Seer, and to complete my joy,
As he had ſaid, I bore the promis'd Boy.
Soon to my Friends the welcome news was known,
Who crouded in a-pace to view my Son;
Surpriz'd, to hear my unexpected bliſs,
And each rejoices for my happineſs.
When all had ſaid, I mov'd my joyful tongue,
And thus, to God, addreſs'd my grateful Song.
O God! What Eloquence can ſing thy praiſe;
Or who can fathom thy ſtupendous ways?
All things obey at thy divine command,
Thou mak'ſt a fruitful field of barren land:
Th' obdurate rock a fertile glebe ſhall be,
And bring forth copious crops, if bid by thee;
Arabia's deſert ſhall with plenty ſmile,
And fruitful vines adorn th' uncultivated ſoil.
As thus ſhe ſpake, her Audience raiſe their voice,
And interrupt her Song, as they rejoice.
O God! we gladly hear thy mighty power,
And joyfully thy gracious name adore:
All Nature is ſubſervient to thy word,
And ſhifts her wonted courſe t' obey her Lord.
We, for thy Servant's joy, our thanks expreſs;
As grows the Child, ſo let her bliſs increaſe;
And may thy Delegate, who did preſide
Over his native hour, his actions guide!
And, ye protecting Angels, that do ſtill
Wait round the bleſs'd, preſerve him from all ill;
Inſpire his ſoul with virtue whilſt on earth,
And be his watchful Guardians until death,
Then ſafely bear -- The Dame here wav'd her hand,
The People ſtraight obey the mute command:
All ſilent ſtand, and all attentive look,
Waiting her words, while thus ſhe mournful ſpoke.
All pleaſures are imperfect here below;
No laſting joys we wretched Mortals know:

And while we wait our growing happineſs,
Some ſudden grief deſtroys the riſing bliſs.
E'er fourteen years were meaſur'd by my Son,
(So ſoon, alas! the greateſt bleſſing's gone)
He in the harveſt to the reapers goes,
To view the bearded ſheaves erect in rows;
Like an embattled Army in the field;
(A new delightful proſpect to the Child!)
But either there the ſcorching Sun diſplay'd
His heat intenſe, and on his vitals prey'd;
Or ſudden blaſt, or apoplectic pain,
With racking torture ſeiz'd his tender brain;
His ſpirits fail'd, he ſtraight began to faint,
And vainly to his Father made complaint.
The glowing roſe was quickly ſeen to fade,
At once, his beauty and his life decay'd.
Soon, at my houſe, the diſmal news I heard;
Soon, at my houſe, the dying Child appeard.
T'embrace him I with fond affection run,
And O! ſaid I, what pain afflicts my Son?
He try'd to ſpeak; but fault'ring, gave a groan;
No perfect word proceeded from his tongue,
But on his lip the broken accents hung.
All means I us'd that might allay his pain,
And ſtrove to give him eaſe, but ſtrove in vain:
Short, and more ſhort he drew his roſy breath,
Too ſure preſage of his approaching death,
The blood congeal'd, the heaving heart beat low,
And his head dropt with a declining bow;
Thrice from my breaſt to raiſe himſelf he try'd,
And thrice ſunk down again, and groaning, dy'd.
Thus, when with care we have nurs'd a beauteous vine,
And taught the docile branches where to twine,
An eaſtern gale, or ſome pernicious froſt,
Nips the young tree, and all our labour's loſt.
With horror chill'd, a-while aghaſt I ſtood
Viewing the Child, and trembling as I view'd:

My

My eyes discharg'd their humid store apace,
And tear succeeded tear a-down my face:
Scarce my oppressed heart the grief sustain'd;
At length, recovering speech, I thus complain'd.
O fleeting joys, inconstant as the wind,
That only for a moment please the mind,
Then fly, & leave a weight of woe behind!
But yet in vain I thus lament and mourn,
The soul once fled shall never more return;
And the fair body now must be convey'd
To earth's dark bosom, and eternal shade.
Yet let me not prescribe a bound to Heaven,
'Twas by a miracle the Child was given;
Nor can I think the wonder is more great,
If the departed soul resumes her seat.
What if I to *Mount Carmel* haste away,
To him who did his mystick birth display?
His powerful word the barren fruitful made,
His powerful word, perhaps, may raise the dead.
The famous *Tishbite* rais'd a Widow's Son;
Elisha has as wondrous actions done:
When he to *Jordan*'s rapid torrent came,
He with the mantle smote th' impetuous stream,
Obsequious to the stroke, the waves divide,
And raise a liquid wall on either side.
At *Jericho*, long had the barren soil
Deceiv'd the Husbandman, and mock'd his toil;
Yet at his word it grew a fertile field,
And pois'nous springs did wholesome waters yield.
Nor can he only such great blessings send,
But curses, if invok'd, on him attend:
Else how at *Bethel* call'd he vengeance down,
As a just scourge on the opprobrious Town?
Again, when *Moab* peace with *Israel* broke,
And vainly strove to quit the servile yoke,
Our powerful Kings led forth th' embattled host
Thro' *Edom*'s sultry wilds and air adust,

Where the Confed'rate Troops no water found,
Dry were the ſprings, and ſteril was the ground,
The Captains wanted ſtrength, & courage fail'd,
When thirſt and Foes at once the Hoſt aſſail'd;
The Kings to him their joint petitions made,
And fainting Soldiers crav'd his timely aid;
Nor crav'd in vain: The powerful word he ſpake,
And flowing waters form'd a ſpacious Lake;
The ſhining ſtreams advance their humid train,
And *Edom*'s wilds ſoon grow a liquid plain.
Not in more plenty did the waters run
Out of the rock, when ſtruck by *Amram*'s Son.
And who can that amazing act forget,
Which he perform'd to pay the Widow's debt?
Whoſe quantity of Oil one pot contain'd,
Yet num'rous veſſels fill'd before 'twas drain'd.
Then he who ſuch ſtupendous acts has done,
If God propitious prove, can raiſe my Son.
So ſaying, up I caught the Child with ſpeed,
And laid it on the ſacred Prophet's bed;
Then call'd my Servant to prepare the Steed.
Penſive and ſad, my mourning Husband ſaid,
Fain would I from this journey thee diſſuade:
No God to-day the Prophet does inſpire,
Nor can he aught reveal thou doſt require.
To whom thus I:
Rather than ſink, attempt my hopes to raiſe,
Tell me no more of ceremonial days,
His God is preſent ſtill, & hears him when he prays.
Thus ſaid, urging my Steed with eager haſte,
Swift as the mountain Roe, the plains I paſt;
O'er hills and dales my journey i purſu'd,
Nor ſlack'd my pace till flow'ry *Carmel* view'd;
On whoſe delightful brow, in cool retreat
Among the curling vines, the Prophet ſat,
Whoſe twining arms a beauteous Arbour made;
The beauteous Arbour form'd a grateful ſhade:

The fanning *Zephyrs* gently play'd around,
And ſhook the trembling leaves, & ſwept the ground.
Down humbly at his feet I proſtrate fell,
Submiſs, and weeping, told the mournful tale.
Calm and compoſe thy anxious mind, ſaid he,
Tears can't revoke th' Almighty's fix'd decree,
We live and die, and both as he thinks fit;
He may command, but Mortals muſt ſubmit.
Death is a debt we all to Nature owe,
And not an evil, but when counted ſo.
Yet if of Heaven I can my ſuit obtain,
Thy Child ſhall live, and thou rejoice again.
Thus ſaid, with looks divine his ſtaff he views,
As if ſome powerful charm he wou'd infuſe,
Then calls his Servant haſtily, and ſaid,
On the Child's face ſee this diſcreetly laid.
Th' obſequious Servant his command obey'd.
O thou, ſaid I, on whom my hope depends,
Do not transfer this work to Servants hands!
If thou thyſelf refuſe with me to go,
Here to the liſt'ning vines I'll vent my woe;
Still proſtrate lie, lamenting for my Son,
'Till every hill prove vocal to my moan.
More had I ſaid, but grief the words ſuppreſs'd;
Yet ſighs and ſilent tears explain'd the reſt.
At length he from his verdant ſeat aroſe,
And haſtily adown the mountain goes
To *Shunem*; we with ſpeed our way purſue,
The City ſoon appears within our view;
And the returning Servant at the gate,
Penſive and ſad without ſucceſs, we met:
The beauteous Child by Death ſtill vanquiſh'd lay;
Still Death inſulted o'er the beauteous prey:
'Till to the houſe the ſacred Seer was come,
And with ſupernal power approach'd the room.
By the dead Child a while he penſive ſtood,
Then from the chamber put the mourning croud:

That done, to God he made his ardent prayer,
And breath'd upon the Child with vital air:
And now the Soul reſumes her priſtine ſeat,
And now the heart begins again to beat;
A ſecond life diffuſes o'er the Dead,
And Death, repuls'd, inglorious doth recede.
Thus when a prowling Wolf hath ſtol'n a Lamb,
He ſternly guards it from the bleating Dam;
But if the Keeper comes, he quits his prey,
And, howling, with reluctance makes away.
And now the Prophet to my longing arms
Reſigns the Child, with more than wonted charms;
The bluſhy roſe ſhone freſher in his face,
And beauty ſmil'd with a ſuperiour grace.
So when Heaven's lamp that rules the genial day,
Behind the ſable Moon purſues his way,
Affrighted Mortals, when th' eclipſe is o'er,
Believe him more illuſtrious than before.
Here ends the Dame, & the promiſcuous throng,
With Hallelujahs thus conclude the Song:
Righteous and good art thou, Lord God of Hoſt,
And all thy works are wonderful and juſt;
Both life and death are in thy powerful hand;
Both life and death obey thy great Command:
By thy great power the Heavens & Earth are aw'd,
Then let the Heavens and Earth adore their God.
Thou glorious Sun, that meaſur'ſt all our days,
Riſing and ſetting, ſtill advance his praiſe.
Thou Moon, & ye leſs glittr'ing orbs that dance
Round this terreſtrial globe, his praiſe advance:
Ye liquid Seas, ſtill waving to and fro,
Praiſe when ye ebb, and praiſe him when ye flow:
Ye wandring Rivers, and each purling ſtream,
As ye purſue your courſe, his praiſe proclaim:
Ye dews, and miſts, and humid vapours, all
Praiſe when ye riſe, and praiſe him when ye fall:
But chiefly *Iſrael*, who ſo oft do'ſt view
His powerful works, his daily praiſe renew.

THE

THE THRESHER'S LABOUR.

THE grateful tribute of these rural Lays,
Which to her Patron's hand the Muse conveys,
Deign to accept; 'tis just she tribute bring
To him whose bounty gives her life to sing:
To him whose generous favours tune her voice,
And bid her 'midst her poverty rejoice.
Inspir'd by these, she dares her self prepare,
To sing the toils of each revolving year:
Those endless toils, which always grow anew,
And the poor *Thresher*'s destin'd to pursue;
Ev'n these with pleasure can the Muse rehearse,
When you, and gratitude, command the verse.
Soon as the Harvest hath laid bare the plains,
And Barns well fill'd reward the Farmer's pains;
What corn each sheaf will yield, intent to hear,
And gues's from thence the profits of the year;
Or else impending ruin to prevent,
By paying, timely, threat'ning landlord's rent,
He calls his Threshers forth: Around we stand,
With deep attention waiting his command:
To each our tasks he readily divides,
And pointing, to our different stations guides.
As he directs, to different Barns we go;
Here two for Wheat, and there for Barley two.
But first, to shew what he expects to find,
These words, or words like these, disclose his mind:
So dry the Corn was carry'd from the field,
So easily 'twill thresh, so well 'twill yield;
Sure large day's work I well may hope for now;
Come, strip, and try, let's see what you can do.

Diveſted of our cloaths, with Flail in hand,
At a juſt diſtance, front to front we ſtand;
And firſt the Threſhall's gently ſwung, to prove,
Whether with juſt exactneſs it will move:
That once ſecure, more quick we whirl them round,
From the ſtrong planks our crab-tree ſtaves rebound,
And echoing Barns return the rattling ſound.
Now in the air our knotty weapons fly,
And now with equal force deſcend from high;
Down one, one up, ſo well they keep the time,
The *Cyclops* hammers could not truer chime;
Nor with more heavy ſtrokes could *Ætna* groan,
When *Vulcan* forg'd the Arms for *Thetis'* Son.
In briny ſtreams our ſweat deſcends apace,
Drops from our locks, or trickles down our face.
No intermiſſion in our works we know;
The noiſy Threſhall muſt for ever go.
Their Maſter abſent, others ſafely play;
The ſleeping Threſhall doth itſelf betray.
Nor yet the tedious labour to beguile,
And make the paſſing minutes ſweetly ſmile,
Can we, like Shepherds, tell a merry tale;
The voice is loſt, drown'd by the noiſy Flail.
But we may think -- Alas! what pleaſing thing
Here to the mind can the dull fancy bring?
The eye beholds no pleaſant object here,
No chearful ſound diverts the liſt'ning ear.
The Shepherd well may tune his voice to ſing,
Inſpir'd by all the beauties of the ſpring:
No fountains murmur here, no lambkins play,
No linets warble, and no fields look gay;
'Tis all a dull and melancholy ſcene,
Fit only to provoke the Muſes ſpleen.
When ſooty peaſe we threſh, you ſcarce can know
Our native colour, as from work we go;
The ſweat, and duſt, and ſuffocating ſmoke,
Make us ſo much like *Ethiopians* look:

We

We ſcare our Wives, when evening brings us home,
And frighted Infants think the Bug-bear come.
Week after week we this dull task purſue,
Unleſs when winnowing days produce a new;
A new indeed, but frequently a worſe,
The Threſhall yields but to the Maſter's curſe:
He counts the buſhels, counts how much a day,
Then ſwears we've idled half our time away.
Why look ye, Rogues! D'ye think that this will do?
Your neighbours threſh as much again as you.
Now in our hands we wiſh our noiſy tools,
To drown the hated names of Rogues and Fools;
But wanting thoſe, we juſt like School-boys look,
When th' angry Maſter views the blotted book:
They cry, their ink was faulty, and their pen;
We, the Corn threſhes bad, 'twas cut too green.
But now the Winter hides his hoary head,
And Nature's face is with new beauty ſpread;
The Spring appears, and kind refreſhing ſhowers
New clothe the field with graſs, & deck with flowers.
Next her, the ripening Summer preſſes on,
And *Sol* begins his longeſt ſtage to run:
Before the door our welcome Maſter ſtands,
And tells us the ripe graſs requires our hands.
The long much-wiſh'd intelligence imparts
Life to our looks, and ſpirit to our hearts:
We wiſh the happy ſeaſon may be fair,
And joyful, long to breathe in opener air.
This change of labour ſeems to give much eaſe;
And does, at leaſt, imagination pleaſe.
With thoughts of happineſs our joy's complete,
There's always bitter mingled with the ſweet.
When Morn does thro' the eaſtern windows peep,
Strait from our beds we ſtart, and ſhake off ſleep;
This new employ with eager haſte to prove,
This new employ becomes ſo much our love:
Alas! that human joys ſhou'd change ſo ſoon,
Even this may bear another face at noon!

The Birds ſalute us as to work we go,
And a new life ſeems in our breaſts to glow.
A-croſs one ſhoulder hangs a Scythe well ſteel'd,
The weapon deſtin'd to unclothe the field;
T'other ſupports the whetſtone, ſcrip, and beer;
That for our Scythes, and theſe our ſelves to chear.
And now the field deſign'd our ſtrength to try
Appears, and meets at laſt our longing eye;
The graſs and ground each chearfully ſurveys,
Willing to ſee which way th' advantage lyes.
As the beſt Man, each claims the foremoſt place,
And our firſt work ſeems but a ſportive race:
With rapid force our well-whet blades we drive,
Strain every nerve, and blow for blow we give:
Tho' but this eminence the foremoſt gains,
Only t' excel the reſt in toil and pains.
But when the ſcorching Sun is mounted high,
And no kind barns with friendly ſhades are nigh,
Our weary Scythes entangle in the graſs,
And ſtreams of ſweat run trickling down a-pace;
Our ſportive labour we too late lament,
And wiſh that ſtrength again, we vainly ſpent.
Thus in the morn a Courſer I have ſeen,
With headlong fury ſcour the level green,
Or mount the hills, if hills are in his way,
As if no labour could his fire allay,
Till the meridian Sun with ſultry heat,
And piercing beams hath bath'd his ſides in ſweat;
The lengthen'd chace ſcarce able to ſuſtain,
He meaſures back the hills and dales with pain.
With heat and labour tir'd, our Scythes we quit,
Search out a ſhady tree, and down we ſit;
From ſcrip and bottle hope new ſtrength to gain;
But ſcrip and bottle too are try'd in vain.
Down our parch'd throats we ſcarce the bread can get,
And quite o'er-ſpent with toil, but faintly eat;
Nor can the bottle only anſwer all,
Alas! the bottle and the beer's too ſmall.

Our

Our time ſlides on, we move from off the graſs,
And each again betakes him to his place.
Not eager now, as late, our ſtrength to prove,
But all contented regular to move:
Often we whet, as often view the Sun,
To ſee how near his tedious race is run;
At length he vails his radiant face from ſight,
And bids the weary Traveller good-night:
Homewards we move, but ſo much ſpent with toil,
We walk but ſlow, and reſt at every ſtile.
Our good expecting Wives, who think we ſtay,
Got to the door, ſoon eye us in the way;
Then from the pot the Dumpling's catch'd in haſte,
And homely by its ſide the Bacon's plac'd.
Supper and ſleep by morn new ſtrength ſupply,
And out we ſet again our work to try;
But not ſo early quite, nor quite ſo faſt,
As to our coſt we did the morning paſt.

Soon as the riſing Sun hath drank the dew,
Another Scene is open'd to our view;
Our Maſter comes, and at his heels a throng
Of prattling Females, arm'd with rake & prong;
Prepar'd, whil'ſt he is here, to make his hay,
Or, if he turns his back, prepar'd to play:
But here, or gone, ſure of this comfort ſtill,
Here's company, ſo they may chat their fill;
And were their hands as active as their tongues,
How nimbly then would move their rakes & prongs!
The graſs again is ſpread upon the ground,
Till not a vacant place is to be found;
And while the piercing Sun-beams on it ſhine,
The Haymakers have time allow'd to dine:
That ſoon diſpatch'd, they ſtill ſit on the ground,
And the brisk chat renew'd, a-freſh goes round;
All talk at once, but ſeeming all to fear
That all they ſpeak ſo well the reſt won't hear;
By quick degrees ſo high their notes they ſtrain,
That Standers-by can nought diſtinguiſh plain:

So

So loud their ſpeech, and ſo confus'd their noiſe;
Scarce puzzled Echo can return a voice;
Yet ſpite of this, they bravely all go on,
Each ſcorns to be, or ſeem to be, outdone:
Till (unobſerv'd before) a low'ring ſky,
Fraught with black clouds, proclaims a ſhower nigh;
The tattling croud can ſcarce their garments gain,
Before deſcends the thick impetuous rain:
Their noiſy prattle all at once is done,
And to the hedge they all for ſhelter run.
Thus have I ſeen on a bright ſummer's day,
On ſome green brake a flock of Sparrows play;
From twig to twig, from buſh to buſh they fly,
And with continu'd chirping fill the ſky;
But on a ſudden, if a ſtorm appears,
Their chirping noiſe no longer dins your ears;
They fly for ſhelter to the thickeſt buſh,
There ſilent ſit, and all at once is huſh.
But better fate ſucceeds this rainy day,
And little labour ſerves to make the hay;
Faſt as 'tis cut, ſo kindly ſhines the Sun,
Turn'd once or twice, the pleaſing work is done:
Next day the cocks appear in equal rows,
Which the glad Maſter in ſafe reeks beſtows.
But now the field we muſt no longer range,
And yet, hard Fate! ſtill work for work we change.
Back to the Barns again in haſte we're ſent,
Where lately ſo much time we penſive ſpent:
Not penſive now; we bleſs the friendly ſhade,
And to avoid the parching Sun are glad.
But few days here we're deſtin'd to remain,
Before our Maſter calls us forth again:
For Harveſt now, ſays he, yourſelves prepare,
The ripen'd Harveſt now demands your care.
Early next morn I ſhall diſturb your reſt,
Get all things ready, and be quickly dreſt.
Strict to his word, ſcarce the next dawn appears,
Before his haſty ſummons fills our ears.

Obedient

Obedient to his call, ſtrait up we get,
And finding ſoon our company complete,
With him, our guide, we to the wheat-field go,
He, to appoint, and we, the work to do.
Ye Reapers, caſt your eyes around the field,
And view the ſcene its different beauties yield;
Then look again with a more tender eye,
To think how ſoon it muſt in ruin lie:
For once ſet in, where-e'er our blows we deal,
There's no reſiſting of the well-whet ſteel;
But here or there, where-e'er our courſe we bend,
Sure deſolation does our ſteps attend.
Thus, when *Arabia*'s Sons, in hopes of prey,
To ſome more fertile Country take their way;
How beauteous all things in the morn appear,
There Villages, and pleaſing Cots are here;
So many pleaſing objects meet the ſight,
The raviſh'd eye could willing gaze 'till night:
But long ere then, where-e'er their troops have paſt,
Thoſe pleaſant proſpects lie a gloomy waſte.
The morning paſt, we ſweat beneath the Sun,
And but uneaſily our work goes on.
Before us we perplexing thiſtles find,
And Corn blown adverſe with the ruffling wind:
Behind our backs the Female gleaners wait,
Who ſometimes ſtoop, & ſometimes hold a chat.
Each morn we early riſe, go late to bed,
And lab'ring hard, a painful life we lead:
For toils, ſcarce ever ceaſing, preſs us now,
Reſt never does, but on the Sabbath ſhow,
And barely that, our Maſter will allow.
Nor, when aſleep, are we ſecure from pain,
We then perform our labours o'er again:
Our mimic fancy always reſtleſs ſeems,
And what we act awake, ſhe acts in dreams.
Hard Fate! Our labours ev'n in ſleep don't ceaſe,
Scarce *Hercules* e'er felt ſuch toils as theſe.

At length in rows ſtands up the well-dry'd Corn;
A grateful ſcene, and ready for the Barn.
Our well-pleas'd Maſter views the fight with joy,
And we for carrying all our force employ.
Confuſion ſoon o'er all the field appears,
And ſtunning clamours fill the workmens ears;
The bells, and claſhing whips, alternate ſound,
And rattling waggons thunder o'er the ground.
The Wheat got in, the peaſe, and other grain,
Share the ſame fate, and ſoon leave bare the plain:
In noiſy triumph the laſt load moves on,
And loud Huzza's proclaim the Harveſt done.
Our Maſter joyful at the welcome ſight,
Invites us all to feaſt with him at night.
A Table plentifully ſpread we find,
And jugs of humming Beer to cheer the mind;
Which he, too generous, puſhes on ſo faſt,
We think no toils to come, nor mind the paſt.
But the next morning ſoon reveals the cheat,
When the ſame toils we muſt again repeat:
To the ſame Barns again muſt back return,
To labour there for room for next year's Corn.
Thus, as the year's revolving courſe goes round,
No reſpite from our labour can be found:
Like *Syſiphus*, our work is never done,
Continually rolls back the reſtleſs ſtone:
Now growing labours ſtill ſucceed the paſt,
And growing always new, muſt always laſt.

ON POVERTY.

THere is no ill on earth which mortals fly
With so much dread, as abject Poverty;
O despicable name! We thee to shun,
On every other evil blindly run.
For fear of thee, distrustful niggards go
In tatter'd rags, and starve their bodies too;
And still are poor, for fear of being so.
For fear of thee, the trader swears and vows
His wares are good, altho' his conscience knows
That he hath us'd his utmost art and skill,
Their faults and imperfections to conceal.
The Sailor terrify'd with thoughts of thee,
Boldly attempts the dangers of the sea:
From east to west, o'er rocks and quick-sands steers;
Tis Poverty, 'tis that alone he fears.
The Soldier too, whom nought but thee can scare,
In hopes of plunder, bravely meets the War:
To fly from Poverty, he runs on death,
And shews he prizes riches more than breath.
Strange terror of mankind! by thee misled,
Not conscience, quick-sands, rocks, or death, they dread
And yet thou art no formidable foe,
Except to little souls, who think thee so.
'Tis only the imagination, that
The blunted edge of Poverty can whet.
'Tis servile fear that does affright us most;
'Tis that transforms a shadow to a ghost.
Thus when a tim'rous Man, in fears grown old,
Reminds the Fairy-tales his nurse has told;
In the dark night he oft will sideways squint,
And sees a Gobling, when there's nothing in't.
Contented Poverty's no dismal thing,
Free from the cares unwieldy Riches bring:

At distance both alike deceive our view;
Nearer approach'd, they take another hue.
The poor Man's labour relishes his meat;
His morsel's pleasant, and his rest is sweet.
The little, Nature craves, we find with ease;
Too much but surfeits into a disease:
And what we have, more than we can enjoy,
Instead of satisfying, does but cloy.
But should we in another prospect take it;
Was Poverty so hideous as they make it;
That steady Man is worthy of our praise,
Who in distress, or pinch'd with hunger, says,
Let Poverty, or want, be what it will,
It does proceed from God, therefore's no ill.
How does his great heroic soul aspire
Above that sordid wealth the rest admire!
His noble thoughts are fix'd on things above,
Where by true faith, he sees the God of love
Hold forth th' attractive prize, which makes him run
His mortal race, to gain th' immortal crown.
Not all the snares a crafty Dev'l can lay,
Can intercept, or stop him in his way;
His God-like soul pursues the thing that's good,
And soars above the common multitude.
Not all the scornful insults of the proud,
Nor censures of the base and groveling croud:
Not Poverty, in all her terrors drest,
Can shake the solid quiet of his breast.
Unmov'd he stands, against his worst of foes,
And mocks the darts which adverse fortune throws;
Calm and compos'd amidst or ease or pain,
Enjoys that true content, which others seek in vain.
So stands a fixed rock, lofty and steep,
Within the confines of the briny deep:
Lash'd by the foaming surges on each side,
Yet can't be shaken by th' indignant tide.
Then why should fantoms discompose the mind,
Or woes, so far from real, fright mankind?

Since

Since Wealth is but imaginary fame,
Since Poverty is nothing but a name;
Since both from God's unerring hand are sent,
Lord, give me neither, give me but content.

HONOUR'D SIR,

I HAVE before the time prescrib'd by you,
Expos'd my weak productions to your view.
'T had been unjust so long to make you wait,
For what at last had scarce been worth your sight:
And only hopes for pardon at your hand,
Because produc'd to light by your command.
Haply you might expect some finish'd Ode,
Or sacred Song, made to the praise of God.
A glorious thought, and laudable! O then
Think on th' illiterate Soul that guides the pen;
Ill suit such tasks with one that holds the plow,
Such lofty subjects with a fate so low.
Alas! Great SIR, was but your learning mine;
And I, like you, a Fav'rite of the Nine;
Sacred *Parnassus'* top I soon would climb,
And find a Hero worthy of my rhyme.
My well-chose subject then I'd treat with sense,
And grace each line with art and eloquence.
I would not sing of *Troy*, or ancient *Greece*;
Of sage *Ulysses*, or of *Priam's* race;
Or any of these fictious Sons of Fame;
Pagans, unworthy of a Christian's theme.
Much nobler thoughts my grateful voice shou'd raise;
In lofty strains, to Great *Messiah's* praise:
With joy I'd sing of his stupendous birth,
And paint his God-like virtues whil'st on earth:
Then with reluctance, horror, and surprize,
I'd mournfully recite his agonies;

I'd trace the heavenly Hero to the tree;
And shew how God in Man expir'd for me:
Next in heroic numbers would I tell,
How the third day he rose, and vanquish'd Hell;
Subdu'd the Grave and Death victoriously,
And gave us earnest of Eternity.
Such noble subjects shou'd my lays excite;
And you, Great Patron, wou'd in such delight:
Grateful to me, when you well pleas'd shou'd view
Th' accomplish'd sacred piece inscrib'd to you.
But in *Messiah*'s cause I can't proceed,
Lest when I strive to praise him, I degrade.
My Fate, unkind, compels me to be mute,
Because of learning I am destitute;
By which no thought, tho' well conceiv'd, can rise
To full perfection, but in *embryo* dies.
Yet my unpolish'd Soul wou'd fain produce,
And bring forth something, tho' 'tis of no use.
Thus in the country often have I found,
(Thro' slothful Man's neglect) a plat of ground
Waste and uncultivated, void of seeds,
Producing nothing but the rankest weeds.
But why stand I my fate accusing so?
The field calls me to labour, I must go.
The Cow lows after meat; the hungry Steed,
Neighing, complains he wants his usual feed.
Then, SIR, adieu! Accept what you did crave,
And be propitious to your humble Slave.

STEPHEN DUCK.

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